

Almási, Gábor, and Lav Šubarić, eds. *Latin at the Crossroads of Identity: The Evolution of Linguistic Nationalism in the Kingdom of Hungary*. Leiden: Brill, 2015. Pp. 326, maps.
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This splendid collection casts fresh light on the history of Latin as a living language in the eighteenth- and nineteenth-century Hungarian lands, where it remained official state language until 1844. This is a highly welcome revision of clichés about the ineluctable, soaring success of allegedly monolingual national revivals in the region. Instead, *Latin at the Crossroads* throws into sharp relief a new understanding of these “revivals” as “vernacularizing” and intimately interconnected movements, as a competitive emulation of the Latin and Greek classical past, seeking to make its aesthetic and cultural heritage available to all social strata of the respective fatherland. All contributions to the volume draw attention to the rich confessional, political, and social contours of Latin as a living language beyond a thin upper crust of Catholic clerics and literati. In her excellent chapter on Latin journalism in Hungary around 1800, Piroška Balogh emphasizes that Latin functioned as a common tongue among Hungarian Lutherans (whose congregations spoke German, Slovak, and Hungarian).

The predominance of Latin is less surprising when it comes to the Catholic Church, but here too the volume offers revealing insights: It justly portrays the Latinate world of Catholicism as an important mainstay of the cultivation of the vernaculars in the region. Denounced by nineteenth-century liberal historians as obstacles to the “national revivals,” institutions of the Catholic clergy served as powerhouses of translation and language refinement whose significance has yet to be fully appreciated. Baroque humanists aligned the fledgling “national” languages to Latin archetypes on the levels of grammar, style, and rhetoric, thereby paving the way for the gradual replacement of Latin as the language of the arts, sciences, as well as statecraft. Teodora Šek Brnardić’s hugely informative chapter on the Hungarian *Ratio educationis* (1777) shows that Latin persisted as the main language of education after the suppression of the Jesuit order in 1773, but the teaching method switched to a Jansenist-inspired analytical approach, with trilingual (Latin, German, local vernacular) primers and chrestomathies. Brnardić’s essay contains intriguing reflections on the question of whether the mother tongue was to be taught in Latin (as preferred by the Jesuits) or Latin in the mother tongue (as maintained by the Jansenists).

The excellent chapter by Per Pippin Aspaas and László Kontler also deals with the slow dismantling of the Jesuit Republic of Letters, but it does so from the angle of polymath scholarly culture, highlighting its connection to contemporary political skirmishes: The enlightened astronomer Maximilian Hell sought to make Hungary the torchbearer of Catholic learning in Habsburg Central Europe, resisting the Viennese court offices’ surreptitious promotion of German in the educational system. This triumph of Latin-Catholic learning was thwarted by the alienating effect of Hell’s and his collaborator Sajnović’s discovery of the Finno-Ugrian ancestry of the Hungarians, a result of their famous expedition to Vardø on the Barents Sea, undertaken to study the transit of Venus. Made public around 1770, at a time when the Hungarian estates sought to fend off Maria Theresa’s reforms, the Finno-Ugrian theory undermined their proud Scythian ancestry; it threatened to paralyze the corporate noble rights upon which the kingdom’s constitutional life was predicated.

The cloud of Joseph’s German-language decree for Hungary (1784) hovers over the brochures of the 1790s studied by Henrik Hönich in his stimulating chapter. Hönich’s essay provides a close reading of a 1790 pamphlet by István Vedres, thereby supplying a splendid study of the imbrications and cross-linkages between “political languages” in one given text. Instead of treating languages like “republicanism” as transhistorical agents that move glacier-like across epochs, Hönich shows that refinement and politeness, noble republicanism, arguments from primordial and pristine (pre-Christian and pre-Latinate) national “nature,” and ancient

constitutionalism were skillfully interlaced in Vedres's text with which he aimed at wooing the Hungarian nobility into support for the spread of the Magyar language in schooling and public life.

Finally, the chapters grouped together in the book's final section on "The Other Hungarians" deserve special praise: Here Lav Šubarić supplies a much-needed history of the role the Latin question occupied in the permanent constitutional conflict between Hungary and its Southern *partes adnexae*, the tripartite kingdoms of Croatia, Dalmatia, and Slavonia between the 1790s and 1848. Nenad Ristović's essay on the prestige of neo-Latin learning among the Habsburg Serbs does a superb job of connecting the complexity of vernacularization among the Serbs (with its dualism of Slavonic-Serbian and Church Slavonic in Russian recension) to the plurilingualism of the monarchy. Providing exciting material for imperial comparisons, Ristović notes that Habsburg Serbs' grammar schools, in which Latin was the main subject alongside Church Slavonic, were modeled after Ukrainian-Latin institutions in predominantly Roman-Catholic Poland. To the Serbs this seemed a model for defending Orthodox education in a Latinate environment while resisting Roman Catholic propaganda and proselytizing. At the same time the campaign led by literati elsewhere against Latin as a foreign, clerical, and elite language furnished Serbian enlighteners with a host of arguments for the cutback of Church Slavonic. In the final chapter, Levente Nagy discusses the Transylvanian Romanians' rediscovery of their Roman-Dacian pedigree. Nagy analyzes the linguistic-political scuffles over this distinguished origin, and recovers the temporary alliance forged in the 1820s and 1830s between Romanian intellectuals who praised this venerable ancestry and Hungarian nobles who linked the fight for their corporate rights to the defense of Latin as official language of the kingdom.

Franz L. Fillafer
University of Konstanz